



SUPERIOR GENERAL
CONGREGATION OF THE
PRIESTS OF THE SACRED HEART
Dehonians

Prot. N. 0296/2024

Brussels, August 12, 2024.

For Him I live: It is Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20)

Letter at the beginning of the centenary of the death of Father Dehon and in preparation for the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation

*To our SCJ confreres
and to all members of the Dehonian Family*

*“The Jubilee Year is in the course of years what Sunday is in the order of the week
(...)”¹*

With joy, we Dehonian religious and members of the Dehonian Family will enter the Jubilee Year 2025, announced by the Holy Father, as a year of grace for the entire universal Church. As we join the Church for the Jubilee as "Pilgrims of Hope," we will also undertake our pilgrimage of thanksgiving to God for the Centenary of the birth into heaven (*vere dies natalis*) of our Founder, Venerable Fr. Leo John Dehon, and the 150th Anniversary of the founding of our Congregation. In fact, August 12, 2025 will be exactly 100 years since his death and June 28, 2028 will be the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

These two events are of major significance for us all, because they invite us to a profound renewal, both from the point of view of our identity as consecrated persons and of our mission in the Church and in the world. Each member of the congregation and of the Dehonian Family is called to live these events with joy, and to draw the greatest spiritual and charismatic benefit from them.

¹ Léon Dehon, *Holy Year*, in “The Reign of the Heart of Jesus”, editorial, January 1900, pp 1-4.

Based on the Word of God, whose meditation occupied a special place in the life of the Founder, but also on the Constitutions, a true witness to the charismatic and spiritual heritage bequeathed to us by Fr. Dehon, the following theme has been chosen to accompany us in these years of celebration: “Him I live: It is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). These words, in one part, are presented as the foundation of the Founder's experience of faith (Cst. 2) and in the other, they condense his life at the service of the Reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in souls and in society. It is therefore an immersion in the faith experience of Fr. Dehon through meditation on Scripture and, at the same time, a return to our charismatic and spiritual origins through the study and meditation of our Constitutions, in particular the block: “With Christ, at the service of the Kingdom” (Cst. 9-39).

The journey we are starting today, as it was presented at the last General Chapter, will have in prelude a year of preparation (from August 12th 2024 to August 12th 2025) and three years of celebrations. With God's help and the collaboration of all, we hope that this will be a period of profound spiritual and vocational renewal for each religious of the Congregation and for each member of the Dehonian Family.

During this journey, four historical places of the Congregation will have special relevance: Brussels/St. Quentin (France), Quito (Ecuador), Kisangani/Wamba (D. R. of Congo) and Yogyakarta (Indonesia). With the symbol of the cross that represents the location of these places, we want to embrace the world, to reaffirm it in the hope that springs from the Lord's pierced side on the cross, the inextinguishable expression of Christ's love. They will not be exclusive places of celebration, but emblematic points, which will serve us to remember, deepen and celebrate essential aspects of the charism we have received:

- Brussels/Saint Quentin, places of the death of the founder and the birth of the Congregation, which represent the cradle of our spirituality and our social commitment. From there we want to renew our Dehonian vocation (*Domine, quid me vis facere?*) and to rediscover our **spiritual identity**, the foundations of “our experience of faith” (Cst. 9) in the light of the founder's experience of faith (Cst. 2-5).
- In Quito, the place of the first mission of the Congregation, which represents our **missionary and apostolic commitment**. From there we wish to reaffirm all together this commitment to the mission, dear to our Founder, to bring about the Kingdom of God (*Adveniat Regnum Tuum*), expressing and living the missionary dimension of our vocation as “witnesses of the primacy of the Kingdom” (Cst 10-15).
- Kisangani/Wamba, places of the witness of faith of our martyrs, of the confreres whose blood and life have forever marked the African land and the meaning of the oblation lived in the Congregation (*Ecce venio, Ecce ancilla*). From there we wish to emphasize our **reparative oblation**, uniting ourselves to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the salvation of the world; and, following the example of our martyrs, we will renew

ourselves in **the prophetic dimension of our Dehonian vocation**, “united to Christ in his love and his oblation to the Father” (Cst 16-25).

- Yogyakarta, the place of our openness to the world, in its cultural and religious diversity, with a need for openness to **dialogue** and **communion** (*Sint Unum*) among ourselves, between the men and women of our time, and in the world in which we live. From there we wish to renew our social commitment by “participating in the mission of the Church” (Cst. 26-34) and by being “attentive to the calls of the world” (Cst. 35-39), that is, attentive to promoting a new human unity, made up of justice and peace, concerned with a participatory ecology and the preservation of our common home, bearing witness to the fact that “the fraternity for which men thirst is possible in Jesus Christ” (Cst. 65).

Each geo-cultural area, in coordination with the General Government, will organize itself so that each theme is duly addressed and shared with all the other areas and in communion with the Dehonian Family. To this end, we hope that the Superiors of the Entities will constitute their local committees or commissions. In turn, we ask the conferences of major superiors of each geo-cultural area to appoint a continental commission. We hope that by the beginning of October the General Secretariat of the Congregation will have received the names of the coordinators and secretaries of the commissions of each geo-cultural area so that the collaboration and general planning can be developed in the best possible way.

I invite you to take advantage of this time, individually and communally, to revisit our identity and our mission through prayer, study and also our apostolates.

With these words, on this day of August 12, 2024, in this house where our Venerable Founder Father Léon Jean Dehon died on August 12, 1925, I declare open the journey of our Dehonian jubilee, which runs from this memorable day until June 28, 2028. May these years of preparation, formation and celebration renew our response to the vocation of love and reparation that we have received, increase our missionary zeal, strengthen our unity and our passion for justice and peace, for the care of our common home, so that we may always and everywhere be “prophets of love and servant of the reconciliation of men and the world in Christ” (Cst 7).

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his Council